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General Comment

[Edited by Gilbert Campbell Scoggin, The University of Missouri.]

In the *Revue Historique* for September, 1916, Gustave Glotz contributes the final instalment of his bibliographical article "Histoire Grecque, 1911-1914," giving a good summary of historical contributions during the period covered.

The Oxford University Press has announced a new volume under the title *Progress and History*. The book will consist of essays by various scholars, and will be edited by F. S. Marvin. Among the topics treated will be "Prehistoric Times" by R. R. Marett, "Progress and Hellenism" by F. M. Stawell, and "Progress in the Middle Ages" by A. J. Carlyle.

In the *American Historical Review* for January, 1917, will be found a "List of Doctoral Dissertations in History Now in Progress at the Chief American Universities, December, 1916." Of these dissertations nineteen deal specifically with problems in ancient Greek and Roman history, three are on early church history, and eight are concerned with the Middle Ages. The subjects cover a wide range and the classical scholar will find much to whet his intellectual appetite.

An interesting example of traditional Greek progressiveness is seen in the Berkeley High School of Berkeley, California. Printing was added to the school's curriculum, and straightway the members of the Greek Club procured a case of Greek type. On November 14, 1916, they issued the first number of a little paper called ΑΘΗΝΗ, and there have been several subsequent issues, each being an admirable example of Greek printing. Among the things printed are famous quotations, selections from the witticisms of Hierocles, and the Lord's Prayer. The number issued for December 25 is embellished with illuminated capitals. The teacher of Greek in the school is Miss Mary B. Clayes.

Levi Henry Elwell, who had long taught Greek at Amherst College, died on December 27. Coming from the Northampton High School, he entered Amherst and was graduated in the class of 1875. Later he pursued graduate studies at Yale University, there coming under the instruction of Professor Whitney. His first teaching was in the Poughkeepsie Military Academy, but he returned to Amherst in 1877 as instructor in Latin. The following year he became instructor in Greek, and in 1890 he was appointed associate professor of Greek and Sanskrit, which chair he held at the time of his death. Interesting for the history of Indic philology in America is his volume of *Nine Jatakas*, which he edited in 1886, the first Pāli text to be issued in this country. Professor Elwell wrote on genealogy, and he was an accomplished botanist.

Konrad Gesner was born four hundred years ago last March in Zürich. He was of humble parentage; but after finishing his early education in his native city, he was enabled by the help of friends to pursue his studies at Strassburg, Bourges, Paris, and at Basle, at the last-mentioned place taking his degree in medicine. He was a man of wide learning and varied interests. In his own day he was known chiefly as a botanist, but his great work *Historia Animalium*, in four volumes folio, published in 1587, laid the solid foundations of modern zoölogy. In this work Gesner sums up the results of former writers from Aristotle down to his own time. The curious will here find descriptions and illustrations of many mythical creatures, such as sea bishops, sea monks, unicorns, and others terrible to behold. But Gesner must always occupy an important place in the history of exact science. In 1537 he began to teach Greek at Lausanne and his first published work was a Greek dictionary, issued through the house of Froben at about this time. Later he prepared a new edition of this dictionary which contains a preface that is only less famous than that of Dr. Samuel Johnson, wherein he defends the study of Greek as a means of culture. Gesner's general linguistic interest is attested by his *Mithridates de differantiis linguis*, in which he attempts to describe some 130 languages, at the same time presenting the Lord's Prayer in 22 tongues. Some narrow specialist may smile superciliously at such ambitious works, but here we have the precursor of a long line of polyglot works that served a very useful purpose in their day and which found their culmination in the books of Gabelentz and Friedrich Müller. Müller's *Einleitung in die Sprachwissenschaft* appeared at intervals from 1876 to 1888 and was never completed. A knowledge of Sanskrit meantime had led to interest in the restricted Indo-European group. Bopp and Schleicher had led the way; and with the appearance of Brugmann's monumental work both scope and method were determined for an indefinite time to come. Yet as late as the year 1909 Professor Finck, of Berlin, undertook the task of treating within the limits of 127 pages no less than 2,180 languages and dialects! It used to strike me as very strange that Brugmann never referred to Gabelentz in his lectures that I attended. Perhaps the work of Gesner's most often mentioned is his *Bibliotheca Universalis*, which appeared in 1545. In this vast work he proposed to give a list of all authors, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, who ever lived, together with their writings. This certainly cleared the way for such men as Fabricius and Maittaire and made the way comparatively easy for such invaluable works as that of Hübner. Gesner fairly deserves the title of "father of bibliography." Dr. Sandys does not assign much space to Gesner in his larger *History*, and seems to have omitted him altogether from his shorter book. Yet in these days of self-satisfaction and arrogance, when so many petty men have appropriated at second hand the results of the unremitting toil of master-minds, and then in their ignorance scorn the ultimate source of their easily acquired knowledge, generous and thoughtful men may well pay some slight tribute to the pioneers who have made possible our wider knowledge.